



What You Need to Know About Prescription Stimulants

When used as prescribed by a doctor, prescription stimulants safely and effectively help kids with ADHD. But misuse can be very dangerous. Share the article “What You Need to Know About Prescription Stimulants” to help students understand the very real health risks of misusing these drugs. Then assign the “Important Facts About Addiction” activity sheet, and guide students to synthesize what they have learned by creating an eye-catching infographic for other teens.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1 Why is a prescription stimulant not safe for a person without ADHD? (*Prescription stimulants help boost and balance levels of the chemicals dopamine and norepinephrine in the brains of people with ADHD. Since people without ADHD do not need these drugs to regulate these chemicals, the drugs may affect their brains and bodies in different and possibly dangerous ways.*)

2 How do prescription stimulants help to treat symptoms of ADHD? (*The drugs help boost and balance levels of the chemicals dopamine and norepinephrine in the brains of people with ADHD; this helps people with ADHD focus.*)

3 What are two ways people might misuse prescription stimulants? (*People might misuse prescription stimulants by taking a higher dose than prescribed, using the drugs for reasons other than treating ADHD, or using drugs prescribed for someone else.*)

4 What are three ways misusing prescription stimulants can be dangerous to your health? (*Misusing prescription stimulants can cause a pounding heart, anxiety, extreme anger, paranoia, stroke, and heart attack. It can also lead to addiction.*)

5 How can someone become addicted to prescription stimulants? (*When prescription stimulants are misused, they cause a surge of dopamine in the brain. This increases the chance that the person will use the drugs again. Over time, this can lead to addiction.*)

Critical-Thinking Writing Prompts

Grades 6–8 Explain why a doctor’s prescription is needed to obtain prescription stimulants.

Grades 9–10 Imagine your friend is taking prescription stimulants because they believe it helps them do better in school. Write a letter to your friend explaining why this behavior is risky.

Grades 11–12 Use what you learned in the article to explain the illustration. What effects of stimulants are shown?

Remote Learning Suggestions

- **Send** students links or print copies of the student article and student activity, and instruct them to read independently. (For striving readers, record yourself reading the article aloud and instruct them to follow along with the recording.)
- **Use** videoconferencing to discuss the reading comprehension questions together as a class.
- **Have** students complete the student activity on the next page, then create an online folder so they can share their infographics with the class.
- **Wrap** up the lesson with an online or phone discussion synthesizing what they have learned about the importance of prescription stimulants, but also the dangers of misusing them. What facts did they learn from their classmates’ infographics?

Subject Areas

- Science, Biology, Public Health
- English Language Arts
- Health/Life Skills

Standards, Grs. 6–12

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- RI.2** ► Summarize key supporting details of a text.
- RI.9** ► Analyze how two or more texts address similar topics in order to build knowledge.
- W.2** ► Write informative texts to convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through effective selection and organization of content.

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)

- MS-LS1.D/HS-LS1.D** Information Processing
- Practice** Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information
- Crosscutting Concept** Cause and Effect

Additional Lesson Resources

- Tiered Vocabulary Tools: Visit scholastic.com/headsup/prescriptionstimulants for a vocabulary list to support this article.
- headsup.scholastic.com/teachers
- teens.drugabuse.gov



Important Facts About Addiction

Learn about this disease, then create an infographic to share facts with other teens.

STEP 1: GATHER INFORMATION

Read the passage below and take notes as you read.

What Is Addiction?

When people use drugs over and over—despite the harm to their body and mind, as well as to others—it’s an **addiction**. People with an addiction may end up damaging relationships with family and friends and may find it difficult to stay in school or keep a job. They may also stop enjoying activities they once loved.

Who Is at Risk?



There’s no one “type” of person who is at risk for drug addiction. However, certain **risk factors** increase a person’s chance of addiction, including:

- Using drugs at an early age. (The brain continues to develop until a person’s mid-20s.)
- Mental health problems, such as depression
- Having family or friends who use or misuse alcohol or drugs
- Trauma or stressful situations: friends in crisis, extreme hunger, family issues, unsafe housing, financial insecurity
- Strong school connections, on sports teams, in clubs, etc.

It’s important to remember that even if someone has risk factors, they may never use or develop a drug addiction. On the flip side, even a person who has protective factors can develop an addiction.

Getting Help

Addiction is treatable. Behavioral therapies and, in some cases, medications that treat the symptoms can help manage the disease. If you or someone you know needs help, visit **findtreatment.samhsa.gov** or call **800-662-4357** to find addiction treatments in your area.



On the other hand, **protective factors** decrease the chance that a person will develop addiction. These include:

- Strong family bonds
- Future goals (e.g., college, career, marriage and family, travel, etc.)

STEP 2: CREATE AN INFOGRAPHIC

Studies show that some teens put themselves at risk of addiction by misusing prescription stimulants and other drugs. How can you help?

- Create an eye-catching infographic that explains the risks to teens
- Include a mix of text and visuals, such as diagrams, graphs, and images